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The Pessimistic Mr. Beck

FOR woeful wailing of the blackest order commend us to the jeremiad delivered the other day before the American Bar Association by James M. Beck, Solicitor-General of the United States. Surveying mankind in the present generation from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand, he sees nothing but calamity and disaster on all sides. He mourns the departure of the good old times when there was "more reverence for authority." Mutterings of revolution disturb his dreams. Nothing is as it ought to be.

In his admiration for the men of yesterday, Mr. Beck feels pushed to brand as worse than worthless the men of today and all their works in every field. He declares that all beauty and symmetry are vanishing from painting and literature before the audacious onslaught of "undisciplined and uninformed" spirits. For him, all light and leading was the divine monopoly of the Victorian painters and writers and we have bartered our heritage for a mess of pottage in according place to later painters and writers! All honor has gone out of business, out of politics and out of men, if we are to take Mr. Beck's words at face value.

It is to be feared that the eloquent gentleman's liver is out of order, or that he is succumbing to the ancient complaint of senility. His symptoms are characteristic of the atrophy that comes upon one who has fallen into the habit of traveling from Dan to Beersheba, as John Bunyan put it, seeing only vileness where other men see beauty and joy. The fact is significant that Mr. Beck seems to be moved to tears chiefly by the present insurgence of youth.

The shams and the shysters, the profiteers and the demagogues, like the poor, we have always with us. What of it? Have we not also brave and honest souls and that sincere and sound sentiment that ever puts roguery and pretense to shame? Crooks may flourish like the green bay tree for a time; but their end is sure. Today, more than ever, men know that there is a power that maketh for rightness; that progress is the law of life.

Remembering that chaos and horror of the war into which the rule and behest of old men plunged the world and from which we have so lately emerged, is it any wonder that youth is insurgent and challenging? Would it not be strange if impatience with the old accepted things by which we were led blindly into so fearful a trap should not express itself in even cubist art and astonishing verse?

No; the world is fairly safe after all. The disturbance youth is making everywhere evidences a wholesome and divine discontent. It means not so much disrespect for authority as determination that the authority that commands respect by being worthy of it shall be established in the seats of the mighty. What Americans all over the land are after is not revolution but better order in their own affairs and a larger realization and application of the principles upon which our Republic was built by the fathers, and by which alone it can be continued by the sons.

The Mania for Protection

WHEN some years ago the "protectionist" idea reached its logical climax in "Schedule K," and, after menacing a wide split in the Republican party, was repudiated by the voters at the polls in an election that returned the Democrats to power, it was supposed that the country had learned its lesson and turned a bad corner.

Post-war politics, however, shows that the notion of having the government use its taxing power to tax

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profits into the pockets of one set of people and out of those of another—always at the expense of the consumer—is still very much alive. About the most brazen expansion of the mania is the proposition of certain railroad officials that freight-hauling motor trucks should be taxed by the state and the Federal governments to such a point that shippers will have to favor the railroads.

A more enlightened policy would recognize that there is business enough for all and organize to meet competition fairly. It may be well to tax motor truck companies operating under franchises, so that they shall pay a fair share of the cost of road construction and maintenance; but to levy a tax deliberately intended to hurt their business and limit their usefulness would be as stupid as it would be unjust.

Cannot Leave Out Lloyd George

SOME notion of the present French attitude regarding the British premier is suggested in a recent chronicle of that sprightly boulevardier, Louis Forest, in the *Paris Matin*. A fair reader, complimenting him on his humor, begs him to continue to make people laugh. "That life may be pleasant is the great need of the times," she writes, adding: "And enough of that Lloyd George who no longer interests anybody!"

To this Forest rejoins in lively mock heroics: "What! Mr. Lloyd George interests nobody? For my part, he interests me hugely. If he continues his present policy much longer, my reader who would enjoy her laugh will wind up by weeping. It is fortunate that there are still among us those whom Mr. Lloyd George interests. They are the true protectors of the ladies' laughter. If Mr. Lloyd George continues, the lady who likes to laugh will see France isolated and impoverished. Will that be so gay? She will see the English, excluded by the Germans from the world's trade and taking out of our manufacturers satisfaction for their disappointment and vexation. That would be droll, would it not? . . . Yes, the lady who wishes only to laugh exaggerates!"

The One Thing Needful

IT TAKES courage to really live—courage and hard work. For no man can be said to have life in him unless he has discovered and rejoiced in the discovery that fate has given him hard stunts, not easy ones. And the harder the stunt, the greater the victory and the greater the man. Rule and dominion always come to the overcomer of difficulties and obstacles. General Pershing has told us that during his campaigns in France he found that no sooner had he managed to accomplish a task which seemed beyond his powers than he found himself facing another and bigger task. And after this sort of thing had been going on for some time, he realized that his capacity for work enlarged with every task accomplished. The normal man is like the athlete, happy only when doing things worth while.

Courage, purpose, persistence, determination are all very well. We are all familiar with Buxton's saying that the longer he lived the more he became convinced that the essential difference between man and man, between the failure and the success, was concentration of purpose, holding an unconquerable will to achievement. But courage, determination, perseverance, concentration are all impossible without faith. With faith all things are possible and nothing is impossible.

The encouraging thing about General Pershing's example is its demonstration of the fact that faith grows by what it feeds on. The least atom of genuine faith, to begin with, will suffice for a starter. With any faith—faith "even as a mustard seed"—a man may be sure of that well begun which is half done. Like a muscle, faith increases with exercise until finally there is consciousness of that full self-confidence in which a man feels himself equal to any and every emergency, and doing the work which at first seemed difficult and doubtful with joyful ease and serenity.

The rich young ruler in the parable went away sorrowful because he lacked faith. The one thing needful, which had been overlooked in his training and his views of life, was self-confidence. Let no man run away with the notion that any career, any enterprise, any character likely to last, can be built up on other than the rock-foundation of invincible and unconquerable faith; faith in the worth of his work, his cause, himself. If he thinks to base his structure on the shifting sands of outside help or patronage, on conformity to custom or prejudice, on special privilege or favor from politicians or governments, relatives or friends, the day will surely come when like Humpty-Dumpty he will "have a great fall."

The Advance in the Price of Cotton

HUNDREDS of millions of dollars are being added to the wealth of the South and a situation bordering on bankruptcy is being relieved," according to Eugene Meyer, Jr., chairman of the War Finance Corporation. This owing to brighter prospects for the financing of exports and renewed confidence among the small banks.

Cotton is America's largest and most important crop. In normal times, it makes up from 20 to 25 per cent of our total exports. This, Mr. Meyer frankly avows, is the reason he has been "paying particular attention to cotton." As a matter of fact, since the War Finance Corporation announced its first loan to Southern cotton growers on July 7 last, to "permit" the exportation of approximately 100,000 bales, the market price of cotton has gone up from 12 to 18 cents.

What Mr. Meyer does not tell us is that the main reason for this spectacular advance in the price of cotton is due largely to the discovery that English buyers and their agents quietly picked up about one-half of last year's crop at prices around six or seven cents—prices that spelled bankruptcy to the growers—and that these English buyers and a clique of American speculators are now gathering the cream of the recent rise in price.

To the man who stops to think a moment, it is evident that price manipulations of this sort do not add a penny of real wealth to the South. And the cotton grower and every other producer in the land is beginning to ask why those government-created and privileged "Gold Dust Twins," the Federal Reserve Board and the War Finance Corporation, should be allowed to play horse with the exchange values of their products?

A Picture Show Probe

THE resolution introduced in the United States Senate by Senator Meyers calling for a Federal investigation of the motion picture industry should be promptly adopted in the interests of common decency and of the continuance of free institutions in this Republic.

Over and over, this strongly organized interest has announced that it has "entered politics" and proposes to become "a factor in the election of every candidate from alderman to President, from assemblyman to United States Senator." And what is its test of candidates? Simply that they shall pledge themselves to governmental action favoring this one business, regardless of public morals and public interests.

In a hearing before Governor Miller, of New York, last April, representatives of the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry testified that absolute and unlimited power over the whole business in this country is in the hands of four or five men—those named were Messrs. Lasky, Loew and Fox.

The question is a vital one. If four or five men are allowed to gain a strangle hold on our state and national governments for selfish purposes, then representative government is at stake.

Wealth From Waste

WE MAY be a wasteful people in our handling and consumption of some things: food and forests, for instance. But American industrial genius is to be credited with splendid realization of wealth from what was once regarded as inevitable waste. Utilization of the by-products of petroleum and of iron furnaces and of Chicago's packing houses, by-products that once were a nuisance and a source of expense for disposal, now contribute a very large share to the annual dividends of these enterprises.

An example of the possible opportunities remaining in this field is suggested by a Standard Oil expert who has proposed that New York City collect the waste oil floating on the waters of its harbor in 50,000-gallon lots and use it for fuel in furnaces, or as road oil. Not only for the money that might be saved, but also for the lessening of the danger of destructive fires through ignition of the oil, this suggestion has a value that might find appreciation in all our harbor towns.

If a penny saved is a penny gained, the man who points the way to preventing waste is as truly a benefactor as he who makes two blades of grass grow where but one grew before.